
WSDOT Complete Streets & Main Street Highways

2011 Report to the Washington State Legislature

The objective of this report to the Joint Transportation Committee is to outline a grant program including proposed project selection and ranking method, criteria to be considered and a plan for soliciting proposals consistent with the requirements of ESHB 1175 Section 310. WSDOT has worked with interested agencies and organizations through summer and fall of 2011 to draft a program proposal, including Main Street Highways and City arterials.

Section I. Background

In 2007, the US Congress passed the Energy Independence and Security Act, which outlines the Congressional policy regarding use of Complete Streets design techniques.

During the 2010-2011 session, the Washington State Legislature passed the State [Complete Streets Bill](#) (ESHB 1071). The bill was the result of efforts by multi-modal transportation advocacy and healthy communities organizations combined with findings from recent research conducted by WSDOT and the University of Washington on Main Street Highways. The objectives for this research were to explore community transportation design policy to improve collaboration when state highways serve as local main streets, determine successful approaches to meet the federal requirements for visioning set forth in SAFETEA-LU [23USC135(f)(3)(B)(ii)], find ways to assist local agencies in improving their grant applications to WSDOT, identify new ways to translate context sensitive design guidance into practice, and support staff and organizational development by connecting the architecture profession and transportation engineering.¹

What is the primary purpose of the 2010 Legislation?

The purpose of the 2010-11 state legislation was to spur transportation design and redevelopment efforts to make the state highways and local arterials within local communities more walkable, bikable and transit-friendly, and to do so in a way that furthered collaboration between local communities and the WSDOT.

The state legislation also creates a grant program that provides an opportunity to increase coordination between WSDOT and local agencies to reduce modal conflicts (freight, pedestrians, transit, motor vehicles, bicyclists, etc.) and maximize both WSDOT and local resources to resolve common project delivery challenges including traffic management, posted speeds, on-street parking, business access, and targeted safety concerns.

¹ Nicholls, Jim, *State Highways as Main Streets: A Study of Community Design and Visioning*, WA-RD 733.1
<http://www.wsdot.wa.gov/research/reports/fullreports/733.1.pdf>

What are the Legislated Goals?

Consistent with the 2010-11 state legislation, as well as state goals and the federal livable communities initiative, this grant program will help stimulate economic revitalization and healthy communities initiatives by helping to revitalize downtowns and densely populated urban areas. Specifically, the Complete Streets Bill outlines four goals for this program including:

- (a) Promoting healthy communities by encouraging walking, bicycling and using public transportation.
- (b) Improving safety by designing major arterials to include features such as wider sidewalks, dedicated bicycle facilities, medians, and pedestrian streetscape features, including trees where appropriate.
- (c) Protecting the environment and reducing congestion by providing safe alternatives to single occupancy driving.
- (d) Preserving community character by involving local citizens and stakeholders to participate in planning and design decisions.

Section II. Proposed Program Outline

The purpose of this program is to encourage street designs that safely meet the needs of all users including bicyclists, pedestrians, motorists, and public transportation users and also protect and preserve community environment and character.

Recognizing that improvements to these city streets and main street highways are critical to community development in cities and towns across the state, this program provides funds for transportation improvements that support infill and redevelopment, intensify land uses, and connect housing and employment in order to improve the health and safety of Washington residents.

The following provides details for the Complete Streets and Main Street Highways program.

Examples of Eligible Projects

Eligible projects will include the addition of, or significant repair to, city streets or main streets that also serve as state highways and provide street access with all users in mind. The following are examples of some eligible project elements.

Project Development – a maximum of 30 percent of project cost

- Community design that includes public engagement in planning and design decisions.

Right of Way Acquisition

Sample Construction Elements (Grant applications may include a combination of construction elements.)

- Crossing/Intersection treatments/Roundabouts
- Signage, striping, markings
- Streetscape, gateway treatments
- Sidewalks
- Bio-retention features
- Lighting
- Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) accommodations
- Bike lanes, bike boulevards, and cycle tracks
- Urban trails and trail crossings
- Bicycle parking and stations
- Traffic calming (medians, refuge islands, curb extensions)
- Freight accommodation including signage and loading zone/parking strategies
- Transit accommodation including bus pullouts, pads for bus stop installation, pedestrian access to transit.
- Electric vehicle charging stations
- Furnishings
- Frontage improvements required to be constructed within existing or dedicated street right-of-way according to permit conditions established by the city for project development. Generally frontage improvements may include, but not be limited to, clearing, grading, sub-grade preparation, pavements, curbs, gutters, sidewalks, landscaping, signage, lighting, storm drainage or retention features.
- Roadway construction
- Intelligent Transportation Systems (ITS)

*Note: Eligible projects shall demonstrate their ability to adequately support ongoing operations and maintenance costs including a statement for how future preservation and replacement costs are supported. A maintenance and operations agreement may be required to demonstrate the community's capacity to adequately cover these costs.

This program is not intended to be a pavement resurfacing program and pavement preservation elements will not be eligible for funding through this program. However, projects that leverage paving investments will be considered higher priority.

Eligible projects should be part of community plans.

Proposed Project Selection & Ranking Method

Project selection criteria will consider whether the project addresses a priority location on main street highways or comparable location on local arterial streets. These locations may be identified as safety priorities, multi-modal mobility priorities, freight priorities, or needs associated with scenic and recreational highways, bicycle and pedestrian mobility needs, or other.

All proposals will be reviewed to ensure that they are complete and eligible for funding. A grant review committee will evaluate the proposals and make recommendations. WSDOT staff will conduct site visits for priority projects prior to developing the list of priorities.

The following criteria, based on the legislated goals for the program and other relevant considerations, will be used to evaluate the project proposals.

(a) Promoting healthy communities by encouraging walking, bicycling and using public transportation –

How well will the project improve connections and/or establish safer and fully accessible crossings, sidewalks, trails, bike facilities, and transit connections consistent with AASHTO, ITE or other peer reviewed, context sensitive solutions guides, reports and publications.

10 Pts = Substantial long term connectivity solution.

5 Pts = Moderate improvements.

1 Pt = Little or no improvement to connectivity will be derived from the project.

(b) Improving safety by designing major arterials to include features such as wider sidewalks, dedicated bicycle facilities, medians, and pedestrian streetscape features, including trees where appropriate.

Based on recent state and national research, arterial streets in urban areas with higher speeds, higher motor vehicle volumes, and housing mixed with commercial attractions, transit service, and other pedestrian and bicycle generators are the locations with the most transportation conflicts, collisions and risk. How will the project improve safety, while expanding mobility for all users, especially at-risk populations?

10 Pts = Substantial long term safety solution.

5 Pts = Moderate improvements.

1 Pt = Little or no improvement to safety will be derived from the project or safety improvement is incomplete or short term.

(c) Protecting the environment and reducing congestion by providing safe alternatives to single occupancy driving –

In order to make alternatives to single occupancy driving safe and viable proximity and connections are needed between and among existing housing, centers of employment, education, retail and recreation. How well will this project support infill, encourage redevelopment and reuse of existing building stock, intensify land uses, and connect housing and employment.

10 Pts = Substantial impacts to congestion through improving connections between housing, centers, of employment, education, retail and recreation.

5 Pts = Moderate impacts.

1 Pt = Little or no impacts to congestion will be derived from the project.

(d) Preserving community character by involving local citizens and stakeholders to participate in planning and design decisions. –

Recent research has shown that transportation projects on urban arterials and main street highways have a greater likelihood of scope, schedule and budget changes that often result in additional costs. This is primarily due to the complexity of the setting and level of interest by area residents and stakeholders. Research has demonstrated that more and better up front coordination and communication and engagement of local citizens and stakeholders in design sometimes called 'Community Design', can reduce the potential for project delay or cost over-runs. How has or how will this project ensure community engagement in planning and design decisions that will help to preserve community character?

10 Pts = Substantial commitment to community involvement in planning and design.

5 Pts = Moderate commitment.

1 Pt = Little or no consideration of citizen and stakeholder participation in planning and design decisions.

Other consideration will be given to the following (5 points maximum):

- Project delivery status (planning, environmental review, right of way acquisition, construction plans),
- Matching funds or services
- Consistent with RCW 70.235.070, consideration of impacts to green house gases and vehicle miles traveled.
- Overlap with nationally designated Main Street communities, Main Street affiliates, or National Historic Districts that are also community main streets.
- Consistency with community plans, and
- Consistency with the federal principles of livability (EPA-HUD-DOT partnership) including:
 - Providing more transportation choices
 - Promoting equitable, affordable housing
 - Enhancing economic competitiveness
 - Supporting existing communities
 - Coordinating policies and leverage investment
 - Valuing communities and neighborhoods

Plan for Soliciting Proposals

All incorporated cities within Washington that have in place an adopted complete streets ordinance or demonstrated equivalent are eligible to apply (consistent with the Complete Streets Bill).

WSDOT's Highways and Local Programs will use a solicitation process similar to other grant programs administered by the Division (e.g., Bicycle and Pedestrian Safety, Safe Routes to Schools, City Safety Program).

Submittal Process

Submittals must either be sent via the website or by e-mail (paper submittals will not be accepted). The proposal shall be submitted as Microsoft Word documents or Adobe Acrobat pdf file and include the following to be considered:

1. A completed and signed **Complete Streets & Main Street Highways Grant Application Form**. (See Sample Form in the Appendix of this Report).
2. A plan sheet showing project design detail.

Section III. Additional Recommendations

Funding

The State Secretary of Transportation should approve a list of projects recommended by a multi-agency review committee. WSDOT would be required to provide a report to the legislature by December 1, following each grant cycle.

Grant Terms

Terms of the Complete Streets & Main Street Highways projects should be three years in length maximum, with the possibility of an administratively-approved two year extension with the submission of adequate proof of progress.

Eligibility

The Complete Streets Bill allows stipulates that only incorporated cities and towns are eligible to apply. All public agencies should be eligible to apply and projects should be evaluated based on criteria as defined through this process. Priority should be given to projects on urban or main street arterials that help to meet the needs of all users and protect and preserve a community's environment and character.

Those agencies receiving grant funding through this program that have demonstrated equivalent ordinances or standards, but are willing to commit to putting a complete streets ordinance in place before completion of the three year term of the grant should be eligible to apply. A "demonstrated equivalent" local ordinance and/or standards is defined as follows:

- Includes a vision for how and why the community wants to complete its streets.
- Specifies that 'all users' includes pedestrians, bicyclists and transit passengers of all ages and abilities, as well as trucks, buses and automobiles.
- Applies to both new and retrofit projects, including design, planning, maintenance, and operations, for the entire right of way.

- Makes any exceptions specific and sets a clear procedure that requires high-level approval of exceptions.
- Encourages street connectivity and aims to create a comprehensive, integrated, connected network for all modes.
- Is adoptable by all agencies to cover all roads.
- Directs the use of the latest and best design criteria and guidelines while recognizing the need for flexibility in balancing user needs.
- Directs that complete streets solutions will complement the context of the community.
- Establishes performance standards with measurable outcomes.

Section IV. Program Assessment

How will WSDOT measure performance of this grant program?

WSDOT will report program impacts to the legislature by December 15th, post-grant solicitation and ranking. WSDOT will report specifically on the following:

- Number of improvements made
- Number of communities receiving grants
- Total cumulative amount awarded
- Status of the projects (i.e., complete, pending, etc.)

WSDOT will also include summary information in the reports to the legislature related to project performance (i.e., safety, mobility, access). Additional information related to improved economic development opportunities or economic vitality and sustainability will be provided where available.